Web Design

Second Edition

• Easy to follow • Step-by-step tasks • In full colour

in Simple steps

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Web Design

Ensure every page has a page footer

Almost as important as the header is the footer, and like the header, the footer should repeat on every page. Footers usually contain 'housekeeping' links to topics such as the site map, terms of site use, copyright and similar topics. The footer also commonly contains information such as last updated, contact information, and sometimes the site's top-level navigation categories.

1 Navigate to the UK government's Department for Culture, Media and Sport homepage (www.culture.gov.uk).

2 Scroll to the page's bottom and notice the footer. Navigate to a couple of the site's internal pages; note the footer is consistent across pages.

Make hyperlinks and icons explicit

You have probably been to at least one website where the navigation was confusing. An easy way to confuse users is by designing navigation links that do not look like hyperlinks.

1 Refer to the two hypothetical pages shown here. Besides being design masterpieces, complete with a scantily clad model, they illustrate ambiguous and explicit icon links.

2 Note that in the first version, although the graphics look like they might be links, until you move your mouse over an icon this is not completely clear.

3 In the second version, the page labels all the graphics with a text hyperlink, allowing you to click the graphic or the text link.
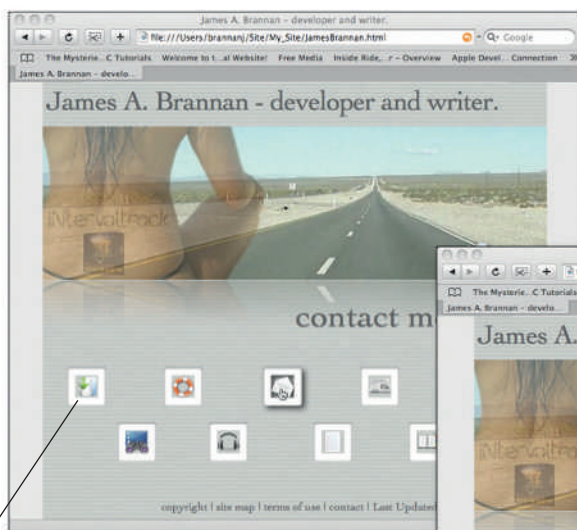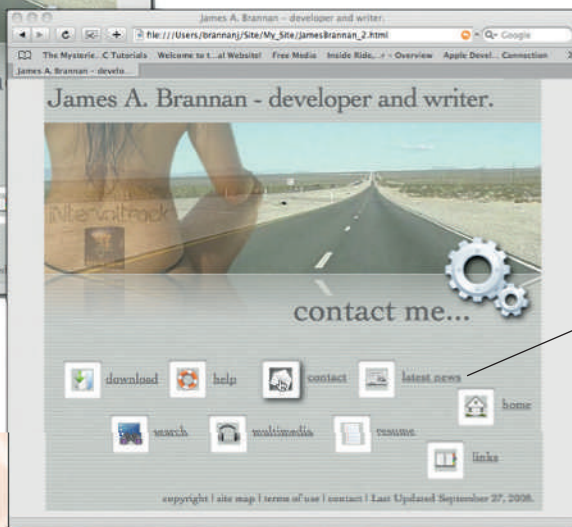
HOT TIP: Hyperlinks are supposed to be underlined and a different colour. Avoid confusing users; do not modify hyperlinks if you can avoid doing so.

Use breadcrumb trails when designing complex sites

Breadcrumb trails show a user's location within a site. A breadcrumb trail is a single line of text links that traces the path from a website's home to the current page. Each level is a link to the relevant page. The current page is usually not a link in the breadcrumb trail.

1 Refer to page shown here at www.rnib.org.uk. The current page is Laws and standards for websites. This page is four levels deep from the homepage: Home > Professionals > Web Access Centre > Laws and standards.

2 Each hyperlink in the breadcrumb trail is a hyperlink to the level's main page. For instance, clicking 'Web Access Centre' would take you to the Web Access Centre.

HOT TIP: Breadcrumb trails are an easy way for a lost user to navigate back 'home'.

Always create a site map or site index

If your site is more than a few pages, a site map is one of your site's most important pages. A site map lists your entire site's links on one page. If developing a larger site, consider using an alphabetised site index rather than a site map.

1 Navigate to www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk and click 'Site Map' in the navigation bar.
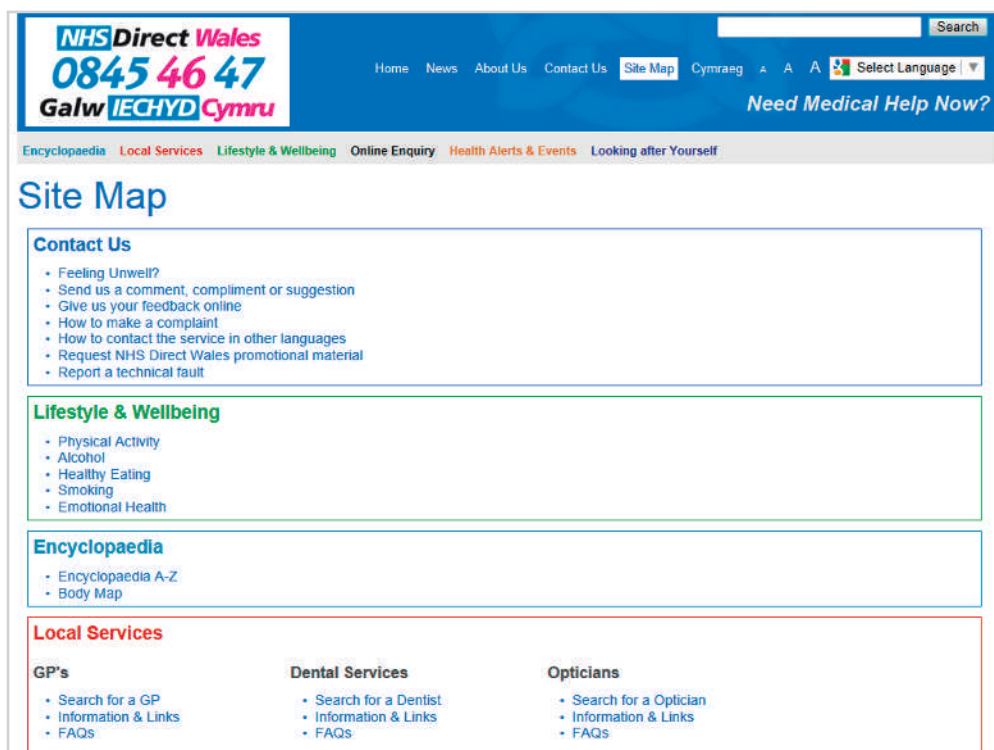
2 Navigate to www.direct.gov.uk and click 'Site index' in the navigation bar near the top.
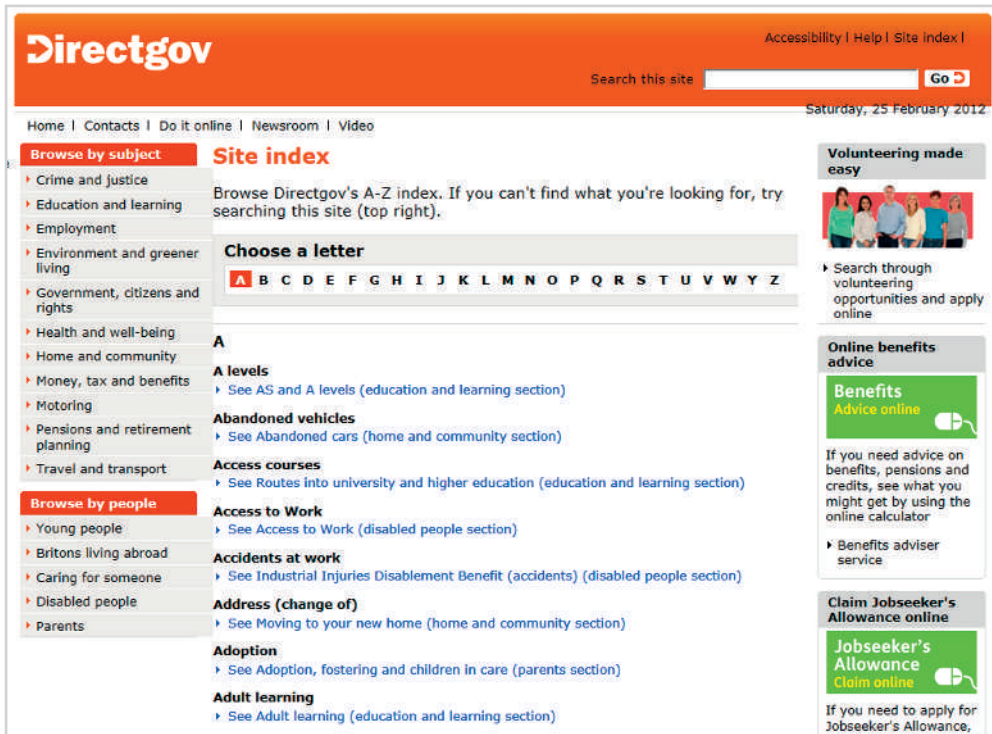
3 Note the similarities and differences between the two. Consider which one's style would be more appropriate for your site.

SEE ALSO: See 'Translate the outline to a site map' on page 37. This site map translates almost directly to the site map you created when first drafting your site, with the subsequent additions and subtractions accounted for.

? DID YOU KNOW?

A site index is exactly like a book's index, only each index term is a hyperlink to the site's relevant page.

Create a prototype navigation template

Creating a prototype navigation template while still developing a site's architecture is often helpful. Clients are impatient and want to see results immediately. And most clients do not consider site map results; they consider webpage results.

1 Navigate to www.freetemplates.org and find the Puzzled CSS template. I base the navigation template shown here on that template.

2 When creating a template, translate the first-level pages into your main navigation menu. Because the names in the map on page 37 are too long, I shortened them when adding them to the template.

DID YOU KNOW?
Creating a bona-fide template mitigates some risk by giving a client an early opportunity to review the proposed design and offer suggestions.

HOT TIP: A navigation template can be as simple as a sketch on paper, or a bona-fide template, complete with HTML code and CSS style sheet.